Met Office

February 2011

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

A 'westerly' weather type prevailed for most of the month, bringing plenty of cloud and bands of rain or showers at times. There were some strong winds in the first week, especially across northern areas. Temperatures were generally near or above normal throughout and there were few frosts.

The UK mean temperature for the month was about 1.7 °C above the 1981-2010 average, and it was particularly mild in central England. It was the mildest February since 2002 and the ninth mildest in the last 100 years. The number of air frosts was the fourth lowest in February in the last 50 years. Rainfall was close to normal in southern England and Wales, and northern Scotland, but it was wetter than normal elsewhere. It was particularly wet in parts of northern England and southern Scotland, where it was one of the wettest Februarys in the last 100 years. It was a little sunnier than normal in north-west Scotland and Northern Ireland but a relatively dull month elsewhere especially across East Anglia and south-east England, where it was one of the dullest Februarys on record.

A maximum temperature of 16.0 °C was recorded at Edenbridge (Kent) on 24th. A minimum temperature of -6.8 °C was recorded at Balmoral (Aberdeenshire) on 11th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 on the 5th, 143.2 mm of rainfall was measured at Honister Pass (Cumbria). A snow depth of 10 cm was recorded at Copley (County Durham) at 0900 on the 19th. A wind gust of 93 mph was recorded at Lerwick (Shetland) early on the 4th, with gusts of over 130 mph on the summits of the Scottish mountains.

Weather Impacts

During the first week, very strong winds and heavy rain caused damage and disruption across many northern and western areas. Overnight from the 3rd to 4th, severe gales cut power to several thousand properties across western and northern Scotland and caused some structural damage and dangerous driving conditions here and in northern England. This was followed by localised flooding in central Scotland overnight 4th to 5th. Further strong winds and rain brought localised flooding of roads and properties and felled trees in north and mid-Wales, north-west England and Northern Ireland on the 6th.

The remainder of the month was mostly uneventful, apart from some snow over northern hills on the 19th and 21st. A south-westerly airstream introduced milder weather in the last week with daytime temperatures in parts of eastern England rising to around 15 °C, a value not seen since last November.

England diary of highlights

A mostly mild, unsettled month with plenty of cloud, bands of rain or showers at times and some strong winds early on. Mean temperatures for the month were around 2.0 °C above the 1981-2010 average, making it the mildest February since 2002 and the ninth mildest in the last 100 years. The number of air frosts was the third lowest in February in the last 50 years. It was somewhat drier than normal across parts of the south-west, but very wet in many northern areas. Almost twice the average amount was recorded in Lancashire where, it was the eighth-wettest February in the last 100 years. It was duller than normal in most areas, particularly across East Anglia and the south-east where less than 70% of normal sunshine was recorded, making it one of the dullest Februarys on record.

1st to 7th

The main feature was the strong, generally westerly, winds. These were strongest overnight on 3rd to 4th and during 7th, with many places seeing gusts of 50 to 60 mph There were gusts of 108 mph at Great Dun Fell (Cumbria) on 3rd, and 89 mph on 7th. There were also frequent outbreaks of rain, occasionally heavy. Between 4th and 6th this rain turned more persistent, particularly across central and northern parts, with 143.2 mm at Honister Pass (Cumbria) in 24 hours to 0900 on 5th. Temperatures started below average, with overnight minima close to or just below freezing. However it then became very mild in places, with the temperature reaching 14.0 °C at Bridlington (Yorkshire) on 4th.

8th to 12th

A generally settled period. Low cloud and fog formed quite widely overnight, particularly on 10th and 11th, persisting through the day in places. There were also some outbreaks of rain, particularly in the south and on 10th and 11th. Where cloud did break, overnight temperatures dipped close to freezing. Temperatures by day were rather mild, particularly in any sunshine, reaching 14.8 °C at Pershore College (Worcestershire) on 11th.

13th to 17th

This period saw a return to more unsettled conditions. Outbreaks of heavy rain spread eastwards on 13th, but became lighter. This was followed by heavy and occasionally thundery showers, with some hail, on 14th. Further heavy rain spread north-eastwards through 15th, with widespread and occasionally heavy showers following behind. On 16th and 17th outbreaks of rain continued in western parts, whereas eastern areas remained generally dry, with some sunshine developing after early mist and fog.

18th to 23rd

Pressure was low to the west and high to the east, introducing colder air particularly to eastern areas. The 18th started rather cloudy and misty. Later a band of rain spread into the far west, turning heavy in the south-west. This continued to spread eastwards overnight and through the morning, turning to snow across northern hills, giving depths of 5 to 10 cm quite widely. This cleared through the afternoon, leaving most places dry and rather cloudy. This pattern continued through the rest of the period, with bands of rain slowly spreading from the west and turning to snow over northern and eastern hills. Temperatures ranged from mild in the west to rather cold in the east, for example the maximum temperature on 22nd was 11.0 °C at Plymouth (Devon), but only 5.5 °C at Weybourne (Norfolk).

24th to 28th

This period saw a transition to an anticyclonic pressure pattern. The 24th was generally fine after some early rain, however some western parts were rather misty. The 25th saw another fine start before outbreaks of heavy rain spread from the west to all parts. Frequent, occasionally heavy showers on 26th and 27th. The last day of the month was settled, but cloudy and rather cold, especially in the east where maximum temperatures were around 4 °C in many places.

Wales diary of highlights

Unsettled but mild for much of the month with bands of rain at times and some strong winds early on. Mean temperatures for the month were around 2.0 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was the mildest February since 2002 and the eighth mildest in the last 100 years. The number of air frosts was the equal fourth lowest in February in the last 50 years. Rainfall was not far from normal in the south, but it was wetter across the north, where totals approached 150% of normal. It was duller than normal in most areas, particularly in the south.

1st to 7th

A cold start to 1st, especially across the south. During the day a weakening band of rain spread south-eastwards. The 2nd was cloudy in many areas, and further outbreaks of rain moved south-eastwards. A more general spell of rain occurred later on 4th and during 5th, especially across the north-west. Although it was rather mild, it became very windy, particularly over coasts and hills with a gust of 90 mph recorded at Lake Vyrnwy (Powys) on 4th. In the 24 hours to 0900 on 6th, 97.4 mm of rainfall was measured at Lake Vyrnwy and 121.6 mm at Capel Curig (Conwy).

8th to 13th

A ridge of high pressure on 8th brought somewhat more settled weather and resulted in a widespread frost to start the day. Although pressure remained generally high from 9th to 12th, weak frontal systems lay across Wales, bringing a good deal of cloud and some occasional rain, with some heavier bursts in western areas. Brighter and mainly dry conditions occurred for many on 12th but rain returned across all parts on 13th.

14th to 18th

Showery conditions prevailed on 14th followed by a band of rain that moved erratically north and east on 15th. Despite the rain, the temperature at Valley (Anglesey) reached 10.2 °C. Better conditions on 16th for many, although rain did push up from the south-west later. The generally dry weather also continued on 17th but rain arrived from the west later on 18th.

19th to 26th

Some significant rainfall occurred during the early hours of 19th with 20 mm falling in around 6 hours at Capel Curig. However, conditions improved and many places were dry through much of the day. The 20th also saw plenty of dry weather, although showers moved into the south-west later and these then affected all parts during 21st. Southerly or south-westerly winds prevailed from 22nd to 25th with frontal systems bringing plenty of cloud at times and also occasional rain. It became mild again with temperatures widely exceeding 10 °C on 24th and 25th. Later on 25th and during 26th a slow-moving frontal system brought a spell of persistent and, at times, heavy rain across all parts.

27th to 28th

A cold front moved eastwards on 27th, introducing a north-westerly airstream. Initially it was dry but a band of showers moved across all parts during the day, clearing by evening. By 28th, high pressure was building giving mainly dry and settled weather.

Scotland diary of highlights

A mostly mild, unsettled month with bands of rain or showers at times and some strong winds in the first week. Mean temperatures for the month were around 1.0 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall ranged from close to normal across much of northern Scotland to well above normal south of a line from Aberdeen to Glasgow, where around 200% of average was recorded in places including Fife, the Lothians and Borders. In these areas, it was one of the wettest Februarys in the last 100 years. Sunshine totals were somewhat above normal in the north-west but it was duller than normal across the south-east.

1st to 9th

The month began on a very unsettled note with spells of heavy rain, especially in the south. These gave 69.4 mm of rainfall in the first 4 days at Bishopton (Glasgow), with 45.2 mm at Gogarbank (Edinburgh), not far short of the average for the whole month. The most intense winter storm of the season brought widespread gales on 3rd into 4th, severe in places with gusts of 89 mph at Stornoway airport (Western Isles) and 93 mph at Lerwick (Shetland). Mild air on 4th saw the temperature at Hunterston (Ayrshire) reach 13.1 °C. On 5th and 6th further spells of rain affected southern and central areas at times, often heavy. The north remained

brighter but colder with some wintry showers. On 7th heavy rain turned to snow over some higher ground, and briefly to lower levels before it cleared in the afternoon. The rest of 7th and 8th were bright with sunshine and scattered showers, these showers mainly in the northwest, though 8th did start frosty in many areas. The 9th was mainly cloudy with rain at times, heavy in the west with Eskdalemuir (Dumfries and Galloway) recording 32.2 mm in 24 hours to 0900.

10th to 19th

The 10th was mainly dry with some sunshine, though with frost early and late. Rain spread north-eastwards on 11th, this continuing into the night and giving a 24-hour total of 17.0 mm at Dyce (Aberdeenshire). Brighter weather spread from the south-west on 12th but more rain crossed the country on 13th, followed by brighter conditions. The 14th was showery, these showers turning wintry across the south-west in the evening. After a frosty start on 15th it clouded over with showers or longer spells of rain. Generally cloudy on 16th with outbreaks of rain, this turning to sleet in Shetland. Overnight freezing fog in central areas cleared around midday on 17th, otherwise it was a generally cloudy day with rain at times, the best of any sunshine in the north-west. Mostly cloudy on 18th, with patchy rain, but brighter on the west coast and in the north-west. Rain and sleet on 19th, with some snow mainly on high ground.

20th to 28th

From 20th to 22nd it was rather cloudy but mainly dry, with any rain light and patchy and snow flurries over higher ground. Rain turned heavier in the west on 23rd and 24th, but much of the east stayed dry and mild, Tain Range (Highland) reaching 14.8 °C on 24th. Another band of rain moved eastwards on 25th, followed by frequent showers in the north-west, with Kinlochewe (Highland) recording 41.2 mm in 24 hours to 0900 on 26th. The 26th and 27th were bright with sunny spells and scattered showers, though less mild. After a frosty start, with the temperature at Altnaharra (Highland) having dipped to -6.6 °C, the 28th ended the month on a fine sunny note.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

A mostly mild, unsettled month with bands of rain or showers at times and some strong winds early on. Mean temperatures for the month were around 1.5 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was the mildest February since 1998 and the equal seventh mildest in the last 100 years. Rainfall was generally above normal, ranging from about 150% of average across Counties Fermanagh and Tyrone to over 175% in parts of Down and Antrim. It was the wettest February since 2002. Sunshine totals were somewhat above normal.

1st to 10th

The month started on a mild, but very unsettled, note with spells of rain or showers, often heavy. The 3rd was particularly wet and windy, and a gust of 83 mph was recorded at Orlock Head (County Down) in the afternoon. Very mild air on 4th with the temperature at Murlough (County Down) reaching 14.2 °C. Further spells of rain and strong winds continued until early on 7th. Then most areas had a couple of mainly dry days with a touch of frost in places early on 8th. Rain returned overnight giving a wet day on 9th, but conditions improved again on 10th when it was dry and bright.

11th to 18th

The 11th was mild but cloudy with rain. This cleared to give a brighter day on 12th. More heavy rain arrived overnight giving a wet start to 13th before it turned brighter with some sunshine. The 14th also started wet but once more cleared to a brighter afternoon. Further bands of rain spread north across the province on 15th and 16th with some drier clearer interludes. Some light rain on 17th, mainly in the east, cleared later with some fog forming at night. This led to a dry bright day on 18th but more rain arrived overnight.

19th to 28th

The 19th and 20th were bright, mild and mainly dry; the temperature reached 12.5 °C at Ballykelly (County Londonderry) on 19th. Some rain arrived overnight and this gave a wet morning on 21st especially over Down and Antrim before drier, brighter weather arrived in the afternoon. The 22nd and 23rd were mostly cloudy with rain at times but it was very mild indeed, with the temperature reaching 14.9 °C on 23rd at Murlough, in the lee of the Mourne Mountains. The 24th was rather cloudy but mainly dry and still very mild, Helens Bay (County Down) on Belfast Lough reaching 14.1 °C. Rain at first on 25th cleared to sunshine and showers but rain returned later. This finally cleared early on 26th, then the next two days were bright with sunny spells and just isolated showers. After a frosty start, the 28th ended the month on a fine sunny note.

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